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IN THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the present application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) Sugar-free hard-coated comestibles consisting of a hard coating and an edible, chewable and/or pharmaceutical core and said hard coating is obtainable by using a coating syrup comprising at least 95% maltitol and characterised in that

a) dry matter content of syrup is from 68-72%, and

b) dry matter content of syrup is comprising from 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊.

2. (Currently amended) Sugar-free hard-coated comestibles according to claim 1, characterised in that said maltitol syrup ~~is~~ consisting consists of:

a) ~~From~~ from 95-97% by weight of maltitol,

b) ~~Maximum~~ a maximum of 1.5% by weight of DP₁,

c) ~~From~~ from 0-1.5% by weight of DP₃,

d) ~~From~~ from 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊.

3. (Original) Sugar-free hard-coated comestibles according to claim 1 or 2 wherein the core is selected from the group consisting of pharmaceutical tablets, chewing gum, confectionery product, chocolate and nut.

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4. (Original) Sugar-free hard-coated comestibles according to claim 3 characterised in that the core is chewing gum and the hard coating is non-sticky and the surface of the hard coating is regularly formed and remains intact during processing.

5. (Currently amended) Process for preparing sugar-free hard-coated comestibles and said process comprising the following steps:

a) ~~Applying~~ applying a coating syrup, containing a maltitol syrup, onto the cores of the comestibles in a moving bed of a coating apparatus,

b) ~~Applying~~ applying maltitol in powder form for obtaining coated cores,

c) ~~Drying~~ drying the coated cores by using drying air in the temperature range of from 15 to 45°C and a moisture content of at most 50% relative humidity, and said process is characterised in that maltitol syrups of step a) has a dry matter content from 68-72% and said maltitol syrup ~~is comprising~~ comprises 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊.

6. (Currently amended) Process according to claim 5 characterised in that in step a) dry matter of maltitol syrup is consisting of:

a) ~~From~~ from 95-97% by weight of maltitol,

b) ~~Maximum~~ a maximum of 1.5% by weight of DP₁,

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c) ~~From~~ from 0-1.5% by weight of DP₃,

d) ~~From~~ from 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊.

7. (Original) Use of maltitol syrup comprising from 0.7-1.5% by weight of DP₄₊ on dry matter for improving hard coating of hard-coated comestibles.

8. (Original) Use according at claim 7 characterised in that said syrup is applied at dry matter content from 68-72%.

9. (New) Sugar-free comestibles according to claim 1, characterized in that the dry matter content of said syrup is from 70-72%.

10. (New) Sugar-free comestibles according to claim 1, characterized in that said comestibles have a smooth, regular surface.